

Bucks Quarterly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends
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Thomas Swain, Clerk
Philadelphia Yearly Meeting
1515 Cherry Street
Philadelphia PA 19102-1479

April 3, 2012

Dear Thomas,

At the Bucks Quarterly Meeting held on February 19, 2012, Friends raised concerns regarding the Yearly Meeting's financial crisis and budget process. A special session of the Quarter was therefore called to address these concerns.

On April 1, 2012, 45 Friends, representing 13 of our 14 monthly meetings (including at least 6 Interim Meeting representatives) gathered in worship, asking Spirit to guide us. We labored for 2 ½ hours with an intention to develop a coherent and constructive statement to be forwarded to Interim Meeting, the result of which follows here.

We are encouraged to hear from a member of the Financial Oversight Working Group about new measures being taken to rectify fundamental weaknesses in Yearly Meeting accounting practices. We are also heartened to hear that the proposed 2013 budget reflects the financial realities faced by our Yearly Meeting.

While we applaud these recent and necessary improvements, Friends also feel deep misgivings about how (or whether) change can occur as we move toward the future. Our most basic concerns revolve around an "us vs. them" mentality, a perceived disconnection between individuals, monthly and quarterly meetings, and the Yearly Meeting. Friends report regularly hearing the question, "What has PYM done for us lately?" Based on our discussion, it is fair to say that many Friends have grave doubts about the Yearly Meeting's commitment to future financial diligence and accountability, given past performance. Some Friends hope that the long range planning process might be an opportunity for improved communication and for rebuilding trust.

We have united around three areas where we would like to see continuing, improved effort from PYM's staff and financial committees.

1. Develop a budget process that is prudent, efficient, timely, and transparent.
2. Create budgets that are both balanced and sustainable.
3. Offer proposed budget documents that include not only quantitative financial data, but also qualitative statements regarding how the specific funds are applied, and to which programs, so that individuals can be well informed about Yearly Meeting services and programs.

As several Friends reminded us, we are all members of our Yearly Meeting, and so we are all responsible for the dire situation in which we now find ourselves. Bucks Quarter is itself in the midst of the budgeting process, and we see this as an opportunity to revisit our practices so as to reflect the integrity we ask of our Yearly Meeting. We continue to encourage our members to be involved in the budgeting process by attending Interim Meeting and Annual Sessions.

Nevertheless, we cannot overstate our very serious concern about these matters. We sincerely hope that the systemic changes we are calling for will be implemented, because it is our sense that it would be a daunting challenge to ask the Friends of Bucks Quarter to ever travel this path again.

Respectfully submitted,

Amy Ward Brimmer, Clerk
Bucks Quarter of the
Religious Society of Friends